

## 529th CSSB returns after federal active duty mobilization

Soldiers assigned to the Virginia National Guard's Virginia Beach-based 529th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 329th Regional Support Group returned to the United States Sept. 11, 2019, after serving on federal active duty in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, headquartered in Camp Taji, Iraq, since Dec. 2018. During the deployment they planned and coordinated combat sustainment support, managing all commodities, Operational Contracting Support and Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund, as well as maintenance support for numerous units operating in the Central Command Area of Responsibility with Soldiers in 14 locations spread across four different countries.

"We leave the OIR AO with distinct pride in what we all accomplished together," said Lt. Col. Dennis Rohler, commander of the 529th CSSB. "What I am most proud of is the ability for our teams to operate as decentralized as we did. This takes incredible discipline and vision from every team member. As Command Sgt. Maj. Coleman and I travelled around we had the opportunity to meet a majority of the Soldiers and the leadership and see the high level of execution that were the keys to our successes."

Read more: <https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2019/09/19/14019/>



**Lt. Col. Dennis Rohler and Command Sgt. Maj. Brian Coleman, the 529th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion leadership team, case the 529th's colors during the Transfer of Authority Ceremony to the 152nd Support Battalion Sept. 7, 2019.**

### Virginia National Guard News Headlines

#### **VNG among public safety organizations recognized on First Responders Day**

The Virginia National Guard is among the organizations recognized by Virginia House Resolution 646 designating Sept. 11, 2019, as First Responders Day in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The resolution calls for the designation to continue each succeeding year.

Read more: <https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2019/09/09/14013/>

#### **Virginia National Guard OCS graduates and commissions 11 new officers**

The Virginia National Guard welcomed 11 new second lieutenants from Officer Candidate School Class 61 and 62B in a combined commissioning ceremony held Aug. 17, 2019, at Fort Pickett's 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute.

Read more: <https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2019/09/07/14047/>

#### **183rd RTI certifies new rappel masters**

After four demanding days, 14 active duty, U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard Soldiers earned their rappel master certification after completing the U.S. Army Rappel Master Course, taught at Fort Pickett, Virginia.

Read more: <https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2019/09/18/14061/>

#### **192nd Wing command team tours JBLE**

The 192nd Wing command team took their first tour around the base on Aug. 13, 2019, at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, and the team emphasized the importance, value and the interconnectivity of everyone's efforts in the wing.

Read more: <https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2019/09/19/14069/>

### **Join the Virginia Army National Guard, Virginia Air National Guard or the Virginia Defense Force**

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<https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/vngan/>

# WTC brings Air Assault, Pathfinder School to Fort Pickett

As the sun rose on Fort Pickett's Air Assault Obstacle Course Aug. 13, 2019, several hundred Soldiers were steaming in the morning's muggy heat from their first physical challenge of the day, a two-mile run. That was just the beginning. From there, 238 Soldiers, plus a few Airmen and Sailors, tackled the obstacle course, challenging their strength, endurance and mental toughness as they climbed up, over, around and through nine obstacles. Those who were successful, earned a seat in Air Assault School; those who weren't, went home.

"Air assault is a method of insertion," explained Sgt. 1st Class Robert Summers, noncommissioned officer in charge of the course. Over ten days, he and his staff, all from the Fort Benning-based Warrior Training Center, led their students through a rigorous, three-phase, badge-producing course. The course teaches Soldiers air assault and sling-load operations, as well as rappelling techniques, and graduates Soldiers capable of maximizing the use of helicopter assets both in training and in combat.

"I was nervous every day," said Spc. Joel Cruz, assigned to the Virginia National Guard's 29th Infantry Division. "They prepare you really well, there's really good at implementing education, but also anxiety."

In the first phase of the course, students focused on the basics.

"We teach you what an air assault operation is. We teach you the different types of aircraft, the different capabilities of an aircraft and how to be safe when working in and around an aircraft," Summers said. From there, it's on to the sling-load phase, where students learn basic sling-load operations, how to rig and inspect a sling load, and then they move on to the final phase, the rappelling phase. "In Phase III, we teach them basic rappelling operations, like how to tie a hip rappel seat, how to hook yourself up," Summer said. They start on the wall side of the rappel tower, gaining confidence in themselves and in their equipment, and then they move to the open side and, finally, they rappel from a helicopter. The final challenge is a 12-mile ruck march that must be completed in three hours or less.

"That's usually the biggest challenge, physically, is the obstacle course, the four-mile run and then the 12-mile road march," Summers said. "If you're going to come to Air Assault School, you need to train and prepare your body for the physical requirements."

While the Air Assault students were sweating it out on the Air Assault field, Soldiers enrolled in Pathfinder School were facing a different set of obstacles, these more mental in nature.

"Pathfinders insert ahead of the Soldiers in combat operations and establish drop zones or pick-up zones for helicopter operations," explained 1st Sgt. Robert Ehrlich, Bravo Company first sergeant at the Warrior Training Center, which oversees both Air Assault and Pathfinder Schools. He explained that Pathfinder is a two-week, three-phase course. It trains Soldiers to provide navigational aid and advisory services to military aircraft and how to plan and organize air assault and airdrop operations. Topics covered include aircraft orientation, aero-medical evacuation,



**Soldiers enrolled in Air Assault School conduct aircraft rappels Aug. 22, 2019, at Fort Pickett, Virginia.**

close combat assault, ground-to-air communication, sling load operations, helicopter landing and pick-up zone operations, drop zone operations and how to work with fixed and rotary wing aircraft assets.

"Pathfinder is very academically tough because of the calculations when it comes to developing the drop zones and the pick-up zones," Ehrlich said. He explained that a lot depends on the type of aircraft they're working with, the size of the rotors, what sort of load they may be dropping. "It's academically tough because of the rules and memorization of the product. You have to be able to not only reference the material, but know the material and know they why behind it."

Read more: <https://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2019/09/10/14042/>

## MORE ON THE WEB

**Photos: Negri takes command of 2-183rd RTI**

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vaguardpao/albums/72157710868547391>

**Photos: Thunder Battalion welcomes new commander**

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vaguardpao/albums/72157710770452188>

**Photos: ESGR Boss Lift held for employers of 2-224th**

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vaguardpao/albums/72157710768103278>

**Photos: Soldiers earn German proficiency badge**

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vaguardpao/albums/72157710797970383>

**Photos: Soldiers, Airmen collaborate on incident assessment**

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vaguardpao/albums/72157710941575517>



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